

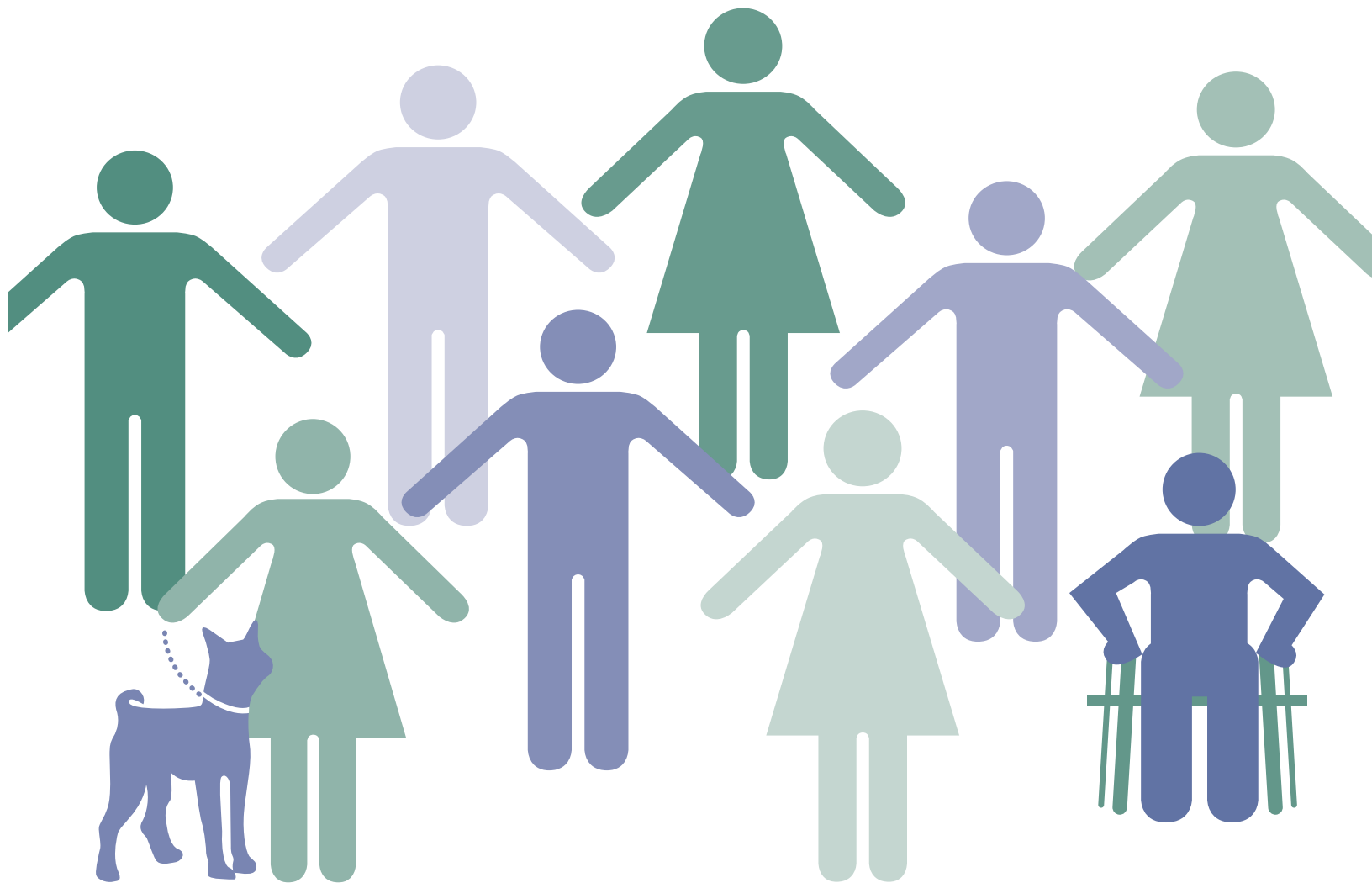


United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

April 2000

# Commitment to Progress

## *Civil Rights at the United States Department of Agriculture*



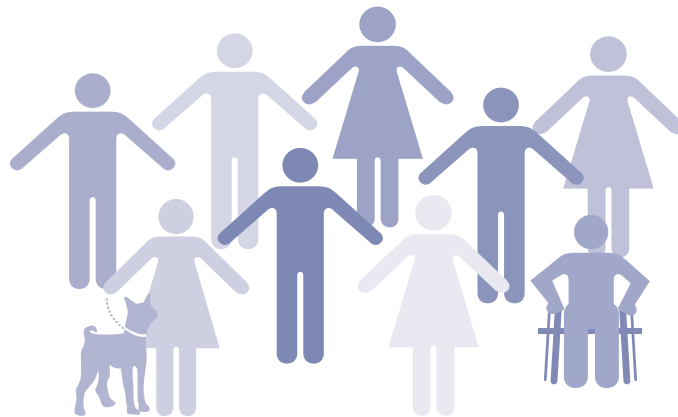


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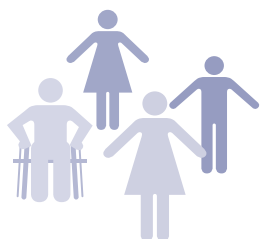
*April 2000*



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# Commitment to Progress: Civil Rights at the United States Department of Agriculture



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# Message from Secretary Dan Glickman

When I became Secretary of Agriculture, I said that I would make it a priority to turn USDA into a civil rights leader in the federal government. But, as John F. Kennedy once said: “Our responsibility is not discharged by an announcement of virtuous ends.” I am proud to say that, when it comes to civil rights, we have backed up our words with action.

This report documents the considerable progress we have made at USDA since I accepted the recommendations of the Civil Rights Action Team (CRAT) 3 years ago. From hiring practices to program outreach to accountability and disciplinary action, we have taken strong steps to ensure that all USDA employees and customers are treated with fairness, dignity, and respect. Many of our efforts go beyond civil rights to reach out to all socially disadvantaged and underserved communities.

Also, the class action settlement we reached with African-American farmers last year is being implemented, providing compensation—and some closure—for those who felt that they were wronged by USDA in the past. Information about the case and the progress being made on processing the plaintiffs’ claims is now available on-line at [www.usda.gov/da/consent.htm](http://www.usda.gov/da/consent.htm).

As pleased as I am about the steps we have taken, I am keenly aware that we are still far from the finish line. This report is not a victory lap. It is, as indicated, a progress report, one that we intend to build on in the coming years. Our vigilance and resolve are as strong as they were when we first attacked this problem.

I want to thank everyone who has played a role in advancing USDA’s civil rights efforts. That includes our employees, partners, and volunteers who have shown both a commitment to justice and the professional competence to carry that commitment through. It also includes minority farmers and other constituencies whose determination and perseverance have been a key catalyst to change.

I ask everyone who can contribute for your continued work and dedication, to help USDA truly become what Abraham Lincoln called us: the “People’s Department,” one that makes good on its obligation to serve *all* of the people.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Dan Glickman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Dan" being more prominent and the last name "Glickman" following in a similar style.

# Looking Forward

by Paul W. Fiddick, Assistant Secretary for Administration

We are proud to report the progress we have made in improving the civil rights record at USDA, but are humbled by the task that remains. Although we have addressed the majority of recommendations made by our Civil Rights Action Team (CRAT), others will require additional effort from USDA and the support of Congress. Our goal is to ensure that every customer and employee is treated equitably and fairly, with dignity and respect.

We must continue our efforts to educate our employees and managers on civil rights and to hold them accountable for maintaining a discrimination-free workplace. We will increase the accessibility of our comprehensive civil rights training by offering courses on the Internet and in Spanish. We will propose legislation that would convert all nonfederal FSA State and County Committee positions to Federal employee status.

We must work to address discrimination complaints more quickly. I am committed to processing discrimination complaints within the statutory framework of 180 days. We are developing and implementing new departmental regulations and procedures that clearly delineate the processes and responsibilities needed for timely, effective resolution of our complaints.

We must try to resolve conflicts more effectively when they do arise. To that end, we intend to strengthen the Department's Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) program. By introducing a neutral third party into a dispute, ADR promises to help resolve complaints quickly and with less financial and human costs.

We must increase the Department's efforts to reach out to those who have traditionally been underserved by our programs. We have established an Office of Outreach and are in the process of establishing outreach councils to coordinate and improve the accessibility of our programs and services.

As this report shows, we have laid a solid foundation for addressing civil rights issues in the Department. With the continued support of Congress, our customers, and stakeholders, we will strive to ensure that USDA remains the "People's Department."

## Highlights of USDA Civil Rights Actions Since 1996

The following are examples of what USDA agencies are doing to achieve civil rights goals.

**Increased Lending to African-American Farmers.** Between fiscal year (FY) 1995 and FY 1999, the Farm Service Agency (FSA) increased its lending to black farmers by **67 percent**, making 893 new loans in FY 1999 (up from 530 in FY 1995), totaling \$32.3 million (up from \$19.4 million in FY 1995). These totals include Direct Operating loans, Direct Farm Ownership loans, and Emergency loans.

**USDA Is the Single Largest Lender for African-American Farmers.** According to the 1997 Census of Agriculture, USDA provided loans to 18.9 percent of the 18,451 black farmers and 5.6 percent of the 1,836,484 white farmers. Although black farmers represent only 1 percent of farmers, they comprise 3 percent of the FSA direct loan portfolio.

**Landmark Class Action Settlement With African-American Farmers.** In April 1999, USDA entered into a class action settlement with African-American farmers, providing compensation and closure for those who felt they were wronged by USDA in the past. As of the end of April, payments of almost \$207 million to 4,130 farmers have gone out from the U.S. Department of Justice. A new website, [www.usda.gov/da/consent.html](http://www.usda.gov/da/consent.html), has been established to provide updated information on the settlement. A full outline of the consent decree is included at the back of this report.

**Farm Loans to Women and Minorities Have Increased Significantly, in Percentages and Dollars.** Through more outreach and targeting of funds, the number of FSA direct and guaranteed farm loans made to minorities and women in FY 1999 increased 25 percent from the number made in FY 1998 and 50 percent from the number made in FY 1997. The dollar amounts of loans in FY 1999 totaled \$296 million, an increase of 59 percent over FY 1998 totals of \$187 million and 81 percent over FY 1997.

**Program Delivery Changed To Simplify Loan Deficiency Payment (LDP) Processing.** To ensure there are fewer barriers preventing minorities, women, and small farmers from receiving LDPs, the commodity eligibility requirements were simplified. As a result, some previously ineligible production became eligible for commodity loans and LDPs.

**Faster Loan Processing.** FSA has reduced the average time it takes to process loans. The agency's strategic plan pledged that by 2002 it would cut processing time by 20 percent for direct and guaranteed loans from FY 1996 levels. By 1999, the agency had already exceeded this goal, taking 26 percent less time to process direct loans than in 1996, and 43 percent less time to process guaranteed loans than in 1996.

**More Minorities and Women Serving on County Committees.** Through outreach efforts, the number of minorities and women elected to County Committees has increased each year. Total membership of elected minorities and women on County Committees increased from 763 in 1998 to 1,090 in 1999. The number of minorities, including minority women, increased from 191 in 1998 to 325 in 1999. Women, including minority women, increased from 594 to 816 during the same period, and in 1999, women represented 10.4 percent of all members. The number of African Americans increased from 20 in 1997 to 37 in 1998 and to 75 in 1999. In addition to these elected members, USDA appointed nearly 1,675 women and minority advisors to County Committees in 1999.

**Office of Civil Rights Established.** USDA established a departmentwide Office of Civil Rights (OCR) with separate employment and program divisions. This action fulfills a major recommendation by the Civil Rights Action Team (CRAT). In addition, a special Civil Rights Division was created in the Office of the General Counsel, headed by an Associate General Counsel who reports directly to the General Counsel.

**Customer Needs Addressed.** In order to be more responsive to the needs of small/disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, woodlot owners, and farmworkers, the Secretary appointed a Council to monitor departmentwide efforts.

To make programs and services more readily available to customers on Tribal lands, USDA Service Centers have been established at 32 Tribal headquarters and at 39 other locations on Tribal lands.

USDA also conducted customer service and workforce satisfaction surveys. One major survey showed that of all USDA Service Center customers, about 9 out of 10 are satisfied with the service they received. Minority customers, especially African-American customers, reported a somewhat lower level of satisfaction with the service they received, but both minority and nonminority customers report improvements over previous years.

**Diversity in USDA Employment.** Over the last 6 years, as a result of streamlining and downsizing, the USDA permanent workforce has decreased by almost 15,000 employees (15 percent), from 99,000 to 84,000. The representation of women and minorities, however, has steadily improved, although we have a long way to go. From 1993 to 1999:

- T African-American employment increased from 9.4 percent to 10.8 percent,
- T Hispanic employment increased from 4.1 percent to 4.8 percent,
- T Asian Pacific Islanders increased from 1.7 percent to 2.0 percent,

T American Indians increased from 2.4 percent to 2.6 percent, and

T Women increased from 41.1 percent to 41.9 percent.

**Education.** Education, training, and accountability are avenues for changing the culture at USDA. More than 99 percent of USDA employees have now completed civil rights training, where they learned about the value of diversity in the workforce and among our customers. Many supervisors and managers received additional training to help them manage the diversity of their staffs. And agency heads are now evaluated as much on their civil rights performance as on any other aspect of their jobs.

**Accountability.** From January 1998 through March 2000, **94** disciplinary actions were taken against employees for discrimination or misconduct related to civil rights. These actions, ranging from removals to letters of reprimand, were distributed as follows:

Removal	14
Suspension for 15 days or more	6
Suspension for 14 days or less	34
Reduction in grade/pay	2
Letter of reprimand	38

**Contracts Awarded to Socially Disadvantaged and Minority Firms.** During FY 1999, USDA awarded:

T 18,144 contracts, of which 2,330 (or 12.9 percent of total number of awards) were awarded to socially disadvantaged/minority small business firms, and

T \$3.28 billion, of which \$308 million (or 9.4 percent of total dollars awarded) was awarded to socially disadvantaged/minority small business firms.

**Rural Development Improves Customer Service Through Feedback.** All three agencies in the Rural Development mission area—the Rural Business-Cooperative Service (RBS), Rural Housing Service (RHS), and Rural Utilities Service (RUS)—are using the Service Center Implementation customer feedback system to give customers the opportunity to provide input into programs. The system has already provided some improvements in programs and has received positive feedback from its customers. RUS continues to assess customer satisfaction. For example, it undertook a large-scale assessment of the effectiveness of its outreach efforts to Native Americans, the results of which show RUS how to improve outreach efforts in this field.

**USDA Reaches Out to Minority and Women-Owned Businesses.** To diversify the pool of vendors providing goods and services, USDA forged new partnerships with the National



Black Chamber of Commerce, the National Indian Business Association, the League of United Latin American Citizens, the National Black Business Council and the Business Women's Network. This effort was a recommendation made by the Civil Rights Action Team. The agreements are effective for 4 years and began May 1999.

**USDA Makes Investment in 1890s a Priority.** In FY 1999, USDA invested over \$100 million in Historically Black Colleges and Universities. In 1993, USDA in partnership with the 1890 Task Force, launched the National Scholars Program, which provides full, 4-year scholarships for students at the 1890s and guaranteed USDA employment upon their graduation. The USDA/1890 Task Force also created the Centers for Excellence, which bring USDA resources and experts directly to 1890 schools, with state-of-the-art facilities in forestry, horticulture, food safety, water quality, and more.

**Farmworker Initiative Launched.** In 1999, the National Office of Outreach hired the first USDA Farmworker Coordinator, who initiated a number of collaborative efforts to address issues affecting farmworkers, especially migrant farmworkers. The coordinator worked with:

- T Rural Development to identify grantees to receive the \$20 million appropriated to assist farmworkers who have been affected by natural disasters;
- T The Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Program (CSREES) to secure funding to assist the children of farmworkers (citizen and noncitizen) through the 4-H Youth Program, and with AMS to create pesticide education for farmworkers;
- T The Chief Economist's office to coordinate a program session on farmworkers for the 2000 National Outlook Conference;
- T The Department of Labor and the Department of Health and Human Services to discuss the lack of available housing for farmworkers and their families, as well as the lack of structured activities for the children of farmworkers;
- T The Hispanic Advisory Council to reach out to more than 200 Latino individuals and organizations; and
- T The State of Nebraska public health conference on the health status of farmworkers and rural workers who work in meat packing plants in the Midwest.

**USDA Awards Over \$13.9 Million to Colonias.** Secretary Glickman awarded over \$13.9 million in loans and grants for domestic water and wastewater projects in impoverished Southwest border communities, known as "Colonias," in 1999. As a result of these funds, eight Colonias were able to improve or expand their wastewater systems. Colonias are generally

small communities along the border between Mexico and four States: Arizona, California, Texas, and New Mexico. These communities commonly suffer from inadequate drinking water, poor sanitary waste disposal facilities, and substandard housing. Between 1993 and 1999, USDA invested \$115.8 million in water and wastewater projects in Colonias.

**Food Safety Education Offered.** By broadening distribution of educational materials and publishing materials in Spanish and other languages, the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) is improving the food safety education it provides to underserved customers.

**T** For the first time, press releases with safe food handling information were published in Spanish and placed on the USDA and FSIS web sites. Several frequently requested publications are being translated into Spanish and will be added to the web sites and other distribution points.

**T** Language was identified as a barrier to providing educational and technical assistance to very small plant owners whose primary language is not English. To address the barrier, FSIS conducted more than 10 workshops in such languages as Chinese, Korean, Spanish, and Vietnamese for very small plant owners, and provided videotapes in these languages.

**ARS Launches Spanish News Service.** The Agricultural Research Service (ARS) launched a Spanish version (*Las Noticias*) of the ARS News Service. To produce *Las Noticias*, the ARS Information Staff hired two Spanish-speaking individuals to translate the news items each day. Approximately 125 media outlets subscribe to *Las Noticias*, including TV stations, radio stations, magazines, and newspapers that publish or broadcast in Spanish in the United States. ARS also launched a children's website in Spanish called *Ciencia Para Niños*.

**AMS Serves Spanish-Speaking Customers.** Several Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) programs expanded their customer base by providing literature written in Spanish to serve Spanish-speaking customers. The Livestock and Seed Program wrote market information on cattle crossing the United States/Mexico border in Spanish (*Noticias de Mercado*). The Science and Technology Program wrote pesticide brochures for health professionals in Spanish (*Verificacion del Mantenimiento de Records por el Uso de Plaguicidas*) and a brochure on pesticide record keeping required by USDA (*Hoja De Records Requeridos por el Departamento Federal de Agricultura*). The Transportation & Marketing Program wrote a manual for transporting tropical products in Spanish (*Manual de Transporte de Productos Tropicales*). Additionally, the Milk Marketing Final Rule is available in Spanish.

**International Trade Shows Analyzed.** The Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) Trade Show Office prepared an in-house analysis of 19 shows that took place in 1998-99. The study

analyzed the share of small and minority companies in overall trade show participation. Over two-thirds of the participants were small, and about 21 percent were of minority ownership, including women-owned, Asian-American, Hispanic, and African-American companies. As a result of their participation, small businesses and companies were successful in making sales of American products.

**Farmers Markets—A Big Opportunity for Small Farmers.** The number of farmers markets has grown dramatically in recent years. USDA works closely with State departments of agriculture to encourage development of more farmers markets to assist the small grower. Particular emphasis is placed on minority farmers, as well as access to fresh fruits and vegetables for underserved urban consumers. Food stamp recipients can use their benefits at most farmers markets, as can many participants in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). AMS works with States to encourage market growth, while the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) helps needy families gain access to healthy produce. USDA's 1998 Farmers Market Directory lists 2,746 markets, up from 2,410 in 1996 and 1,755 in 1994 when USDA began collecting the data. Sales at farmers markets will total \$1 billion this year, with most of the money going directly to small family farmers.

**AMS Purchases Commodities From Small, Limited-Resource Businesses.** In FY 1999, AMS commodity purchases from small, disadvantaged, and women-owned businesses totaled \$52 million.

## **Service to Underserved Communities Improves Through Partnerships–USDA Agency Accomplishments**

This section lists key civil rights accomplishments by USDA Agencies, in addition to those listed above in the "Highlights" section.

### **Risk Management Agency (RMA)**

The number of cooperative agreements between RMA and 1890 land-grant institutions, 1994 Tribal colleges, Hispanic Serving Institutions, and community-based organizations nearly doubled from 11 to 20 from FY 1998 to 1999, and now they total more than \$1 million. Through these partnerships, thousands of socially disadvantaged, small and limited-resource farmers and ranchers received information and technical assistance about risk management programs. Examples of cooperative efforts to provide equal access to RMA programs include the following:

- T** North Carolina A&T State University is surveying a broad population of farmers to determine why participation of limited-resource farmers decreased after RMA changed from a dual to a single delivery system.
- T** The Federation of Southern Cooperatives is surveying farmers to identify participation levels, barriers to participation, and the educational and technical assistance needs of minority, small and limited-resource farmers and ranchers.
- T** Bringing Rural America Venture Opportunities (BRAVO) is partnering with RMA and the Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) to create technology-based jobs such as software development on Tribal lands and surrounding economically distressed rural areas.
- T** In the First American Curriculum project, five major curriculum units, both print and computer-assisted instruction, are being designed in partnership with American Indian agricultural producers and 30 Tribal colleges.
- T** The Fresno Small Farm Resource Directory provides a directory of assistance in agricultural marketing, finance and credit, pest management, labor, fertilization, irrigation, soil conservation, risk management, and crop production.
- T** Hmong American Community, Inc., provides postharvest and market training to farmers, as well as education on cooperatives and risk management.

**T** The Intertribal Agriculture Council, funded by RMA and other agencies, provides information to American Indian producers and Tribal governments about programs and technical assistance available for conserving their natural and agricultural resources and for developing individual and Tribal agricultural enterprises.

**USDA Announces New Gleaning Program for Federally Insured Crops.** According to USDA studies, more than one-fourth of all the food produced in the United States is wasted. Each year, in fields, commercial kitchens, markets, stores, and restaurants, billions of pounds of food go to waste. With new guidelines, the program can further reduce food losses that begin in the field. The new guidelines encourage producers covered under the Federal crop insurance program to glean their crops that would otherwise go unused or destroyed, thereby reducing hunger in America.

## **Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS)**

**FAS Provides Export Readiness Training.** Using the Emerging Markets Program, FAS has been working with the Southern United States Trade Association, the Small Business Development Centers, State Departments of Agriculture, and the 1890 land-grant institutions in Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia to train small businesses and cooperatives on export readiness. A session held in April 2000 included the Rural Coalition, the Federation of Southern Cooperatives, and the National Black Farmers Association.

The Intertribal Agricultural Council's second export readiness seminar was held in Phoenix to prepare 13 tribes from around the country to attend the FOODEX trade show in Japan, where they promoted Gila River grapefruit and olive oil; Navajo pelletized alfalfa and pinto beans; Quinault smoked and fresh salmon; Seminole red grapefruit, jerky, and seasonings; and Yakima cherries and asparagus.

FAS Grain and Feed Division marketing specialists worked extensively with a new-to-export, small, minority-owned firm that was pursuing grain export opportunities in North Africa.

### **USDA Approves Pilot Export Training Program for Small and Minority Producers.**

The program will fund a three-State pilot program in Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi for 2 years. About 30 farmers and members of producer cooperatives, processing firms, and other small and minority agricultural businesses are to be trained as trainers with funding from the FAS Emerging Markets Program. The goal of the pilot program is to train participants on the basics of international marketing and to help them identify, research, and take advantage of potential exporting opportunities.

For many small and minority producers, limited local marketing opportunities present a leading threat to economic survival, especially in isolated or depressed rural communities. Exports can provide the additional sales opportunity they need to grow and prosper. Three Historically Black Colleges and Universities—Tuskegee University, Fort Valley State University and Alabama State—will help recruit and train participants and evaluate results.

## **Farm Service Agency (FSA)**

**Outreach to Hispanic Constituents.** FSA contracted with the Hispanic Radio Network to produce and nationally syndicate a series of 10 radio capsules to inform Spanish speakers about County Committee elections. The stories were broadcast as a special series on Camino al Exito (Road to Success), a daily 1-minute program covering financial information and practical advice for achieving economic success. The program aimed to offer general information about FSA programs and services, to focus on the County Committee elections, and to promote the candidate nomination process in County Committee elections. The program targeted geographic areas with underrepresentation of Hispanics on the County Committees (such as New Mexico, California, and Texas).

**USDA Provides \$328 Million To Assist Tobacco Farmers.** In December 1999, the Secretary announced \$328 million to assist tobacco producers in States where tobacco quotas or acreage was reduced for the 1999 crop year. The majority of tobacco farmers are small farmers, and many are limited-resource farmers.

**USDA Delivered Assistance to Tribes Through New Emergency Livestock Feed Program.** In December 1998, USDA provided an emergency livestock feed program to help American Indian tribes hit hard by disaster. The American Indian Livestock Feed Program is administered through Tribal governments. It provides reimbursement for feed-related expenses incurred during natural disasters such as blizzards or droughts and includes beef and dairy cattle, buffalo, sheep, goats, swine, and other food animals. In 1998, the program was funded at \$12.5 million.

**USDA Provides Disaster Assistance to Cherokee Nation.** In November 1998, USDA designated 17 counties in Oklahoma as disaster areas due to drought. The designation allowed farmers in those counties to apply for low-interest USDA emergency farm loans for losses that occurred between May and September 1998. The request for emergency loan approval was made by the Principal Chief of the Cherokees, and the designation marked the first time such a request was made to the Secretary by a Tribal leader.

**Outreach Coordinators Appointed.** FSA has appointed Outreach Coordinators in each State, in addition to Communication Coordinators in each State. Also, FSA Regional Public Affairs Specialists support outreach activities.

**Using Translation To Reach Out.** FSA has translated all fact sheets into Spanish. It has also translated numerous fact sheets into Hmong and French.

**FSA Receives Award for Work With Small and Limited-Resource Businesses.** In FY 1999, FSA Commodity Operations received a Special Achievement Award from the Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization "for outstanding accomplishments in the area of small disadvantaged and women-owned business utilization."

**Continuing Our Efforts To Be Inclusive.** FSA Commodity Operations staff participated in the NISH National Training Conference and Javits-Wagner O'Day. The event focused on expanding horizons for persons with severe disabilities, technology, partnership opportunities, and innovations in marketing. FSA received the President's award "in recognition of outstanding support of employment opportunities for people with severe disabilities through the Javits-Wagner O'Day Program."

## **Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS)**

**Food Safety Education Improved.** By broadening distribution of educational materials and publishing materials in Spanish and other languages, USDA's food safety agency is improving food safety education to underserved customers.

**T** For the first time, press releases with safe food handling information were published in Spanish and placed on the USDA and FSIS web sites. Several frequently requested publications are being translated into Spanish and will be added to the web sites and other distribution points.

**T** In addition, the Meat and Poultry Hotline winter media packet was provided to 183 African-American newspapers.

**Improving Program Delivery.** Language was identified as a barrier to providing education and technical assistance to very small plant owners whose primary language is not English.

**T** To address the barrier, FSIS conducted more than 10 workshops in such languages as Chinese, Korean, Spanish, and Vietnamese for very small plant owners, and provided videotapes in these languages.

- T The agency developed a diverse network to provide training and technical assistance to more than 5,000 very small plants that will implement the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) system in FY 2000. Very small plants are defined as those with fewer than 10 employees and less than \$2.5 million in sales.
- T FSIS has entered into partnerships with 1890 land-grant and Hispanic Serving Institutions and Tribal colleges to provide education and assistance in the development of HACCP plans. Also, guidebooks for the preparation of HACCP plans were translated into several languages.

**Disciplinary Actions Taken.** The agency took nine actions to address civil rights violations by FSIS personnel. Specific adverse actions taken included terminations, reprimands, and suspensions. Corrective actions included letters of caution and counseling.

## **Food and Nutrition Service (FNS)**

**Small Farmer Outreach Initiative.** As part of the Small Farmer Outreach Initiative, FNS took a number of initiatives aimed at reaching underserved customers, including:

- T Expanding State participation in the WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program,
- T Increasing Food Stamp Program participation by farmers markets in States that operate Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT),
- T Promoting participation of schools in the Farmers Market Nutrition Program, and
- T Linking local small farmers to school meal programs.

**New Civil Rights Complaints Tracking System.** FNS implemented a new Civil Rights Complaints Tracking System to determine trends and to address causes of complaints. The information is used by FNS management and is shared with State agencies for training and information purposes.

**USDA Steps Up Efforts To Fight Hunger.** More than one-third of all people eligible for food stamps have not taken advantage of this program, according to a study released in December 1999. Many people, especially those in low-wage jobs, confuse food stamps with other Government assistance, and therefore think they are not eligible. There has been a steady decline in overall food stamp participation since 1993, and food stamp participation is declining at three times the rate of poverty. People are going without food when they don't have to. In recognition of this, President Clinton rolled out a food stamp awareness campaign to get the



word out that there is help for those who need it. Furthermore, the Secretary announced a policy that makes it easier for working families to own a car and still receive food stamps.

**New After-School Program for Low-Income Kids.** A new USDA program provides after-school snacks for children including teens in after-school programs. The program is available to both schools and community organizations. Another program for children, which is underutilized, is the Summer Food Service Program, which provides meals to needy children during the long summer vacation. To help ensure that all nutrition assistance programs are working effectively in towns and communities across the country, USDA has developed a Community Food Security Tool Kit that can help spot potential barriers to effective delivery of nutrition assistance.

**Nutrition Education Grants Awarded.** FNS awarded up to \$600,000 in 4-year grants to a number of projects throughout the country. FNS awarded nutrition education grants to encourage the development of local and State resources to better integrate education services that will expand on the traditional Food Stamp Program delivery system.

**USDA Studies Link Between Breakfast and Learning.** Following up on a Presidential initiative to determine whether free breakfasts for children at school improves academic performance, behavior, and attendance, USDA created a 3-year pilot program that will operate across the country. Through the pilots, certain schools that offer free breakfasts to all children will be compared with schools not offering the free breakfast program, considering such factors as academic achievement, attendance and tardiness, classroom behavior and discipline, and dietary intake over the course of the day. USDA has \$7 million in FY 2000 to fund pilot breakfast programs.

## **Forest Service (FS)**

**Workforce Planning/Affirmative Employment Initiative Used to Plan Workforce of Future.** The Forest Service worked with The National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) to assist in implementing an agency-wide Workforce Planning Initiative. The agency recognizes the value of planning for the future as the workforce is aging, and a number of employees will be eligible to retire in the next 5 years. The initiative provides the agency with an opportunity to integrate affirmative employment, skill management, and succession planning into a comprehensive workforce plan.

**Multicultural Initiatives Assist in Student Hiring.** The Forest Service has established 10 national recruitment initiatives to ensure student hiring and increase diversity in the agency. The initiatives are comprised of programs that reach out to each minority/disabled EEO group. The partnerships and outreach involve top-notch colleges and institutions around the country with

major populations of minority/disabled groups. Each year these national recruitment initiatives provide employment opportunities to over 100 students who work in professional natural resource management positions.

**T Strategic Public Outreach Plan Designed to Reach Underserved Communities.**

A Strategic Public Outreach Plan has been developed to involve the American public—especially underserved, minority, and economically disadvantaged individuals and organizations—in Forest Service activities and services.

**Early Intervention Program (EIP) Resolves Conflicts at Earliest Stage.** EIP assistance is available to all Forest Service employees nationwide. The program focuses on resolving workplace conflicts through professional mediation at the lowest possible level.

**T** In 1999, 256 EIP contacts were made by mediators and 135 mediation sessions were held.

**T** A team of Civil Rights and Human Resource Management staff developed a model standard operating procedure that will integrate EIP into the EEO complaint process and other grievance processes to improve resolution of work place conflicts.

**Senior Executive Service (SES) Performance Measures are Clarified.** In April 1999, the Forest Service Chief revised SES Performance Elements and Standards for all SES managers in the Forest Service, including the civil rights element, and added a new performance element associated with the Government Performance and Results Act.

**T** The Civil Rights unit has provided SES managers with baseline determinates and specific performance elements to measure civil rights performance and improve accountability.

**FS Implements Continuous Improvement Process.** The agency uses the continuous improvement process survey to assess employee satisfaction and concerns. This year the agency will use results of the survey to develop an agency-wide plan to address corporate goals. Surveys were provided to all employees, and the agency received a 46 percent response rate.

**Forest Service Supports Tribal Communities.** In FY 1999, FS hired a full-time Native American Tribal Program Manager in the Southwestern Region (Albuquerque, New Mexico) to:

**T** Help the Regional Office assess Tribal relations in the field offices and with tribes in the Region, and

**T** Work with Native Americans to increase program services to the local Native American population.

FS officials also worked with the Haskell Indian Nations University to develop a natural resources curriculum and to provide employment for Native American students, an effort directed at enabling them to acquire degrees.

During the past few years, the Forest Service completed several government-to-government memorandums of understanding with Alaskan tribes on everything from education to housing to forest management. The agency has helped 11 Alaska Native corporations to complete forest stewardship planning. Through the purchase of 183,000 acres of land in Prince William Sound, it is working to restore habitats damaged by the Exxon Valdez oil spill, while providing resources for Alaska Native communities to invest in their people. The Forest Service is also working with tribes and Alaska Native corporations on technology transfer, youth programs, career fairs, and other partnerships.

## **Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)**

**Outreach Coordinators Established.** A network of Outreach Coordinators has been established throughout the Nation to enhance outreach and to accelerate program delivery. Outreach coordinators have been identified for each NRCS region and State, and for the Pacific Basin, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.

**Increased Outreach to Native Americans.** NRCS set aside \$8.7 million in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) specifically for assistance to Native Americans.

**T** NRCS devoted 5 percent of the EQIP budget to Native American outreach. It conducted 15 workshops on Working Effectively with American Indians, training more than 750 NRCS employees.

**T** NRCS provided technical assistance to 19 American Indian Tribes in developing their Unified Watershed Assessments for the Clean Water Action Plan.

**T** NRCS hired a Native American Manager in California to improve service to Native Americans and increase their representation in the workforce.

**T** NRCS established three new outreach and environmental justice offices at Tribal headquarters in South Dakota, Oklahoma, and Florida.

- T Tribes have approved 35 NRCS offices at Tribal headquarters, and NRCS plans to place 42 additional NRCS offices at Tribal headquarters over the next 2 years.

**Significant Efforts To Increase Diversity.** Minority representation in the NRCS workforce has increased at all levels:

- T NRCS implemented a plan to hire 200 students for career technical positions to improve workforce diversity.
- T The agency spent \$500,000 to increase Hispanic recruitment and to develop recruitment sources. Along these lines, NRCS funded three positions providing liaison between USDA and the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU), and funded the recruitment and employment of 10 summer positions as part of the HACU intern program.
- T NRCS sponsored the Hispanic Engineering Conference to inform participants about careers with the agency. The agency established its first Asian Pacific American liaison position at Polytechnic University-Pomona, California, and its second 1994 Tribal land-grant college liaison at Little Bighorn College.
- T NRCS also hired its first full-time Asian Pacific Islander Program Manager.

**Increased Opportunities and Upward Mobility for Minorities.** NRCS allocated funds for developmental assignments for personnel from the Pacific and Caribbean Basin to work in the continental United States. NRCS is a major supporter of the National Society of Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS). This organization assists minority college students who are working toward agriculture and related majors.

**Environmental Justice.** Departmental regulations for Environmental Justice (EJ) closely follow the requirements of the Executive Order issued in 1994, "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations." All mission areas and agencies are subject to the Departmental Regulation, which is intended to provide greater opportunity for minority and low-income populations to participate in planning, analysis, and decisionmaking that affect their health and environment.

- T NRCS assisted the Forest Service to fund a full-time position on the staff of the Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment to work exclusively on EJ for USDA. The individual selected for this position provides training and works closely with NRCS and other agency EJ coordinators.

**T** NRCS produced an EJ brochure in March 1999 and distributed it throughout all States and regions. It also produced an EJ “Information Facts” fact sheet, and distributed it throughout all States, regions, and headquarters. NRCS worked with several of the Southeast States, assisting their efforts to address environmental injustices throughout that region of the country. NRCS worked with regional offices and State conservationists to provide the necessary assistance to field staff in implementing EJ. NRCS established EJ coordinators for each region and State.

**Procurement Goals Surpassed.** NRCS provided \$40,000 to the Presidential Initiative, BRAVO (Bringing Rural America Venture Opportunities). This particular project is a small business development outreach initiative with the Oklahoma Band of the Choctaw Tribe.

**NRCS, FS Seek More Program Participation by Small and Disadvantaged Farmers.**

Both the NRCS and the Forest Service made program and policy changes to ensure the Forestry Incentives Program would be more accessible to small and disadvantaged farmers and woodlot operators. Several Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) areas are actively assisting small producers with value-added strategies related to farm and timber production, with some providing entrepreneurial development training. NRCS sponsored a conference on income options in Wisconsin. NRCS also sponsored and participated in the Agricultural Marketing Outreach Workshop in Tennessee to help small and disadvantaged farmers improve their marketing skills.

**T** NRCS has also worked with AMS and Florida A&M University to organize small farm operators into cooperatives that can market produce to local school districts in school lunch and breakfast programs.

**T** NRCS led various outreach efforts in California with African-American, Hispanic, and Asian-American farmers. It initiated a Debt for Nature program policy that will assist farmers and landowners on debt write-down and other financial and farm operational issues.

## **Agricultural Research Service (ARS)**

**Future Employees Developed.** ARS continued to support summer employment programs in FY 1999, and appointed more than 800 students under the Hispanic/Native American Student Initiative, the Research Apprenticeship Program, and the Summer Intern Program; more than 300 were minority students. These programs offered students excellent opportunities for hands-on experience in science and agriculture and advanced ARS efforts to promote a diverse workforce.

- T ARS is encouraging Native American college students to work in summer jobs at ARS laboratories near Native American colleges and universities in the Pacific Northwest. The plan is to expand outreach to Dine College next year.
- T ARS has 14 USDA/1890 National Scholars working on research in soil and animal science, engineering, nutrition, technology transfer, plant biotechnology, and computer engineering. In 1997, four scholars graduated, two entered graduate school; and one is working with ARS as a technician to acquire additional training before entering graduate school. In 1998, four Scholars received their undergraduate degrees and two entered graduate school. In 1999, two scholars received their undergraduate degrees and one will enter graduate school.
- T The recipient of the first ARS Graduate Fellowship targeted for a Native American received her doctorate in a commencement ceremony at the University of Colorado on August 7, 1999, and is now a full-time employee in Stoneville, Mississippi.

**Research Needs of Small and Limited-Resource Customers Targeted.** A customer input meeting was held at the Mid-South Area's National Soil Dynamics Laboratory in Auburn, Alabama, with stakeholders, customers, and minority farmers. As a result of the meeting, the research has been redirected to respond directly to the customers' requests for conservation systems research and output.

- T The Fish Diseases and Parasites Research Unit in the Mid-South Area is conducting small farm aquaculture research in Alabama, North Dakota, Minnesota, and California on fish health management.
- T ARS established an Entomological Bio-Control Laboratory at Florida A&M University to develop an academic program in bio-control, which will be connected to other ARS labs in Florida. The long-term goal of this laboratory is to hire two scientists; mentors for undergraduate, graduate, and post doctorate students; and visiting scientists. The new laboratory will represent another avenue for recruiting outstanding scholars.

**Bicultural Library Supported.** Under a memorandum of understanding with the Weslaco, Texas, Bicultural Museum Society, the National Agricultural Library is providing technical guidance in the establishment of the library component of the Agricultural Discovery Center (ADC). The ADC will tell the story of agriculture in the Rio Grande Valley, including the contributions of Hispanics who comprise a large majority of the population of South Texas.

**USDA Launches Biotech Research Project for Sub-Saharan Africa.** As part of the Administration's Partnership for Growth and Opportunity for Africa, the Secretary launched an innovative scientific exchange program to enhance crop biotechnology research in Sub-Saharan

Africa. The project will help reduce hunger, speed scientific progress, and help bring the benefits of biotechnology to small-scale farmers throughout Africa and the United States. The project will utilize the resources of America's 1890 colleges and universities. Agriculture accounts for two-thirds of the jobs and a third of all economic activity in Africa. USDA will provide \$100,000 in startup funds for the project led by Tuskegee University. Cooperative research projects may be established to develop corn and wheat varieties that mature faster, grow well with fewer chemicals, and have enhanced nutrients.

**USDA Sponsors South Africa Exchange for D. C. Teachers.** Through a USDA program, 11 elementary school teachers from Washington, D.C., spent a summer of science in South Africa to assist South African researchers in updating a historical survey of that country's botanical diversity. This program was made possible by the President's Initiative for the District of Columbia.

**Accessibility Improved.** The U.S. National Arboretum completed a 2-year renovation that made the garden wheelchair accessible and eliminated other barriers to the disabled. This accessibility will enable the Arboretum to serve a wider range of visitors, especially those with physical limitations.

## **Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES)**

**Commitment To Higher Education A Priority.** Of the \$924 million provided by CSREES to institutions of higher education in FY 1999, \$105.2 million (or 11 percent) went to minority institutions. CSREES is responsible for assuring that all these programs are administered in accordance with the Department's civil rights regulations and policies.

**Aggressive Small Farms Program Continues.** CSREES has an aggressive small farms program with a contact in each State land-grant institution who is assigned to provide leadership and assistance in this area.

**T** A national small farms conference was held in October 1999 in St. Louis, Missouri, attended by more than 600 Extension educators, scientists, farmers, and other agricultural professionals from the public and private sectors. The purpose of the conference was to build partnerships with public and private sector organizations in order to better serve the needs of the small farm community and reach the underserved. A similar conference was held in 1996 to identify the research and education priorities for small farm programs.

- T To better serve farmers in remote areas, CSREES funded Alabama A&M University to demonstrate the effectiveness of high-performance, cost-effective distance education, and research technology strategies to assist these small farmers.

**Farmers With Disabilities Assisted.** Since agriculture is one of the most hazardous occupations, the Education and Assistance Program has been implemented to help farmers with disabilities learn how to continue to farm. In FY 1999, the program was funded in 18 States, and information is provided to all States through the Building New Ground Resource Center at Purdue University.

**Paraprofessionals Teach the Hard-To-Reach.** In an effort to help hard-to-reach, underserved, limited-resource youth and families with children, the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program is funded through land-grant university partners in every State and U.S. territory. The key to the success of this program has been paraprofessionals doing one-on-one and small group teaching.

**Major Efforts To Increase the Number of Minority Scientists and Professionals.** CSREES administered a number of programs aimed at recruiting and educating minority scientists and professionals and advancing the educational capacity of minority institutions. The Capacity Building Grants Program and Scholars Program are examples.

- T CSREES funded Texas A&M University to maintain the Food and Agricultural Education Information System. This is the only national database on minority enrollments, degrees earned by minorities, and faculty at minority institutions in the agricultural and natural resources sciences.

## **Economic Research Service (ERS)**

**Research Needs of Socially Disadvantaged Addressed.** ERS work includes analysis of low-income and minority populations, as well as limited-resource farmers, farmworkers, and other at-risk populations. ERS has a long history of work focused in these areas.

- T A widely expanded research program, the Food Assistance and Nutrition Research Program addresses nutrition policy needs of low-income households, children, and families. The research agenda focuses on four issues: (1) welfare reform, (2) food security, (3) nutrition and health outcomes, and (4) program integrity and effectiveness.
- T ERS supported the National Commission on Small Farms by developing a typology of farms for the Secretary's Report to Congress on the status of family farms.



**T** *Rural Conditions and Trends* reported on changing conditions and trends in rural areas, with special emphasis on the socioeconomic status of rural minority populations and rural counties with high concentrations of minorities.

**Partnerships with Minority-Serving Institutions Fostered.** In addition to using tools such as cooperative agreements and serving as cooperators in the Capacity Building Grant program, ERS fosters and strengthens the agency's ties with 1890 and other minority-serving institutions. A recent workshop on "Enhancing the USDA-1890 Partnership: Building an Analytic Framework for Assessing Outcomes and Benefits" highlighted the unique contributions of the 1890 institutions and identified ways to measure these contributions.

**Workforce Diversity.** ERS has taken a variety of actions aimed at diversifying the discipline of agricultural economics. As a result of these actions, ERS increased minority representation of the agency's professional workforce to 20 percent in FY 1999, an increase from only 11 percent in FY 1992.

## **National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS)**

**NASS Funds Scholarships for Native American Students.** The National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) provided \$15,000 to the Indian Resource Development Program at New Mexico State University at Las Cruces to provide scholarships to Native American college students who agree to pursue an agriculture-related curriculum during FY 1999.

**Improving the Census.** For the 1997 Census of Agriculture, NASS counted, for the first time, the number of American Indian operators on reservations. This number was included with the count of the number of American Indians operating off reservations. In previous censuses, the census counted one farm operator for each American Indian reservation. For the 1997 census, the goal was to establish an accurate count of the number of American Indian farm operators. Along with the regular census report form, an additional form was delivered to each reservation asking for the number of American Indians who operated a farm or ranch on the reservation.

## **Community Food Security Initiative**

**Initiative Focused on Outreach to Underserved Communities.** Despite the strongest economy in decades, a recent USDA study indicates that in 1998, about 36 million people in the United States, including 14 million children, were hungry or on the brink of hunger. Many elderly, immigrant, and "working-poor" Americans face hunger. While hunger particularly

impacts inner cities and isolated rural communities, suburban households also suffer. And while some families go hungry due to unemployment or homelessness, millions of working poor families—who work hard and play by the rules—are hungry or food insecure simply because they don't earn enough money to purchase the food they need.

Last July, the Secretary convened the first-ever National Summit on Community Food Security, and announced significant, new antihunger efforts by Government, nonprofit organizations, and the business community, including:

- T Nearly \$5 million in USDA grants for community food projects and food assistance and nutrition research. In December 1999, the Secretary launched a Millennium Gardens campaign to dramatically increase the number of community gardens in the country to feed the hungry.
- T In partnership with Second Harvest, Hewlett-Packard will install and operate a new web-based system, *ResourceLink*, to efficiently link growers, manufacturers, processors, and distributors with Second Harvest's 188 food banks and 26 million customers and provide no-cost or low-cost transportation.

The Community Food Security Initiative works with various USDA agencies to provide technical assistance, publicity, and limited seed money to help small and limited-resource farmers sell their products directly to school meal programs.

## Rural Development (RD)

**Workforce Diversity Increased.** USDA's Rural Development (RD) mission area increased the number of minorities in the workplace in 1999, and increased the number of African-American and Asian-American employees, while the overall workforce decreased. RD continues to have significant representation (63.7 percent) of women in its workforce. Civil rights data reflect increases for Hispanics, Asian-American men, and American Indians in the GS 13-15 category.

**RD Provides Business Funding for Minorities and Women.** In FY 1999, \$156 million in Business and Industry (B&I) Program funds (or 13 percent of available funding) were provided for minorities and women. Each of the State offices submits a quarterly report on Business Programs activities, including assistance provided to small, minority, women, and beginning farmers. For example, RBS obligated more than \$10.4 million in loans and grants to Native Americans in FY 1999 for B&I Guaranteed Loans, B&I Direct Loans, Intermediary Relending Program Loans, and Rural Business Enterprise Grants. In FY 1999, the RHS housing program (502 Program) provided funds to more than three times the number of

African-American, Hispanic, Native American, and single-female-head-of-household individuals than those in the general population who recently received loans.

**U.S./South Africa Bi-National Commission Brings Financial Services to Rural Poor in South Africa.** The “village bank” project under the U.S./South Africa Bi-National Commission (BNC) helped set up financial service cooperatives in the rural villages of South Africa where none were previously available. RBS provided a plan to replicate this successful model throughout the country. It also assisted the South African National Department of Agriculture in designing a regulatory system to ensure the future soundness of these banks. RD administers several other BNC projects designed to build human capacity and infrastructure in South Africa in conjunction with NASS, CSREES and RMA.

**Assistance to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).** The RD mission area has a continuing partnership with HBCUs through RBS cooperative agreements with 1890 land-grant institutions, Tuskegee University and others. These efforts are designed to improve the economic health of rural communities by combining the efforts of the colleges and universities with local businesses, public bodies and private non-profit organizations to create businesses and foster infrastructure development. Awards to HBCUs for FY 1999 totaled \$2.6 million.

## **Rural Utilities Service (RUS)**

**RUS Supports Tribal Communities.** RUS continues to advocate advanced telecommunications services for all rural Americans through filings and testimony before the Federal Communications Commission. Recently, RUS appeared before the Commission to support enhanced Lifeline assistance for Native Americans and to address the overall RUS commitment to improving the quality of life in Tribal communities. Other examples of RUS service to Tribal communities is included below.

- T** The RUS Telecommunications Program committed significant investments in Tribal communities last year. In FY 1999, nearly \$52 million in loan funds were awarded to these Tribal entities: Tohono O'odham Utility Authority in Sells, Arizona; Gila River Telecommunications, Inc., in Chandler Arizona; San Carlos Apache Telecommunications, Inc., in San Carlos, Arizona; Fort Mohave Telecommunications, Inc., in Fort Mohave, Arizona; and Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe Telecommunications Authority in Eagle Butte, South Dakota.
- T** The RUS Electric Program awarded more than \$24 million to six borrowers who have a large Native American service area. One such borrower, Tohono O'odham Utility Authority, provides electricity, telephone, water, and waste services in various locations

on the main reservation west of Tucson, Arizona, and electric and water services on the San Xavier Reservation adjacent to the southwestern part of Tucson.

- T RUS also administers a Water and Wastewater Loan and Grant Program to improve the quality of life and to promote economic development in rural America. Hundreds of Native American Tribal communities are primary recipients of Water 2000 investments, with nine Tribal entities receiving \$5 million in grant funds and nearly \$3 million in loan funds in FY 1999.
- T RUS has also awarded a total of \$2.4 million in grant funds for Distance Learning and Telemedicine to Tribal entities.
- T RUS provided a loan for the San Carlos Apaches to form their own telecommunication company and to purchase the telecommunications system from a large regional Bell Telephone system. The community of Bylas, Arizona, within the reservation, had previously had access to only 14 telephones, most of them pay phones that seldom worked. When they took over their own system, that number grew to more than 425 phones. The entire tribe had 607 subscribers before it took over its own system. Today it has over 1,800.

**USDA Funds \$24.5 Million for Water Projects in Alaska Native Communities in FY 2000.** RD continues to commit funds to help Alaska Native communities build the infrastructure they need to thrive. During FY 2000, USDA awarded \$24.5 million in water and waste water disposal grants for Alaska Native villages. USDA has also invested in home improvement for low-income, elderly homeowners, made loans and loan guarantees to help local businesses grow, and provided grants to upgrade community facilities such as roads and health care clinics.

**USDA Funded \$210 Million in Safe Drinking Water Projects in 1999.** In July 1999, the Secretary announced funding of \$210 million in safe drinking water projects for 40 States. In addition, USDA's financial assistance will leverage more than \$75 million from local water districts, county governments, State agencies, and other Federal sources. The new grants and loans announced represented the largest package of financial assistance ever distributed under the Administration's Water 2000 program. At least 2 million rural residents in this country live with serious drinking water problems, including an estimated 740,000 people who have no running water whatsoever. Children and the elderly are at particular risk from illnesses caused by unclean drinking water. The Water 2000 program has already invested in projects to improve drinking water for more than 2.8 million Americans since 1994. Of the \$210 million, \$24 million will fund 12 projects serving low-income, rural towns in Appalachia; \$13.7 million will go to 7 Empowerment Zone or Enterprise Communities projects; \$12.3 million will go to

impoverished Colonias in 4 Southwest States; and \$7.2 million will go to 5 projects in impoverished Mississippi Delta communities.

**Compliance Reviews Conducted.** In consultation with RUS borrowers, USDA's Office of the General Counsel, and the Department of Justice, RD civil rights staff revised the Civil Rights Compliance and Participation Form 268. The form is used to collect data from RUS borrowers to determine their compliance with the civil rights laws and regulations covering federally assisted borrowers. Nationwide, RBS and RHS conducted 5,974 agency program compliance reviews in FY 1999; of this total, 879 were found not to be in compliance with regulations. There were 920 civil rights impact analyses received and reviewed; of these, 23 were found to have adversely impacted delivery of service.

## **Rural Housing Service (RHS)**

**Resources Allocated to the Underserved.** In the Single Family Housing (SFH) Direct Loan Program, the SFH Repair Loan and Grant Programs, and the Multifamily Loan and Grant Programs, 5 percent of the funds allocated are set aside for use in underserved counties.

- T** Currently, counties in 10 States, plus the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and American Samoa, have areas designated as underserved.
- T** In Rural Rental Housing, 5 States used \$11.6 million of Rural Rental Housing funds to build 9 rental housing complexes containing 197 apartments on Native American reservations or in communities where most tenants will be Native Americans.
- T** More than \$593,709 in Housing Preservation Grants was provided to tribes in 7 States to repair 112 deteriorating rural rental units that house low-income Native American families.
- T** Funding for rural education was provided to 8 colleges, 2 Tribal colleges, 13 public schools, and 13 nonprofit schools for FY 1999 in underserved areas and trust Territories, totaling \$11.5 million in direct loans and grants.
- T** The SFH Direct Loan Program helps a significant number of minority families obtain home ownership—well above private sector statistics.
- T** RHS has taken a lead role in the “One Stop Mortgage Center” initiative with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to provide assistance to Native Americans. RHS has been aggressive and successful in lending to Native Americans.

**Rural Health Projects Funded.** RHS funded a total of 81 rural health projects at \$74.5 million. These projects included physician's clinics, dental clinics, nursing homes, psychiatric hospitals, outpatient clinics, home health care, and health-care office buildings.

**Accessibility Survey Conducted.** RD conducted a national survey of accessible Rural Rental Housing units funded and constructed since 1992 to determine compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. As a result of the survey, evaluations of building plans, and site inspections of newly built existing housing units, a training module was developed and provided to all State civil rights coordinators/managers, multifamily housing coordinators, and State architects and engineers.

**USDA Makes Over \$25 million Available for Farmworker Housing.** In May 1999, Secretary Glickman announced over \$25 million in loans and grants to finance construction of 500 new units of rental housing for domestic farmworkers. This funding is \$10.3 million more than the previous year.

**USDA's Commitment to Farmworkers Doesn't Stop With Housing.** Through the USDA-financed Farm Labor Housing and Community Facilities Loan and Grant programs, many owners of Farm Labor Housing complexes have taken advantage of the opportunity to provide their tenants with child care or educational services such as Head Start. The Administration included \$40 million in funding for Farm Labor Housing for FY 2000. Through efforts such as WIC, food stamps, and the School Meals Program, USDA is coordinating with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to ensure that the children of farmworkers do not go hungry and that they get proper nutrition. Through the Administration's America Reads program, USDA instituted a pilot project in four States to provide tutoring to children of farmworkers in farm labor housing complexes.

**USDA Provides Disaster Recovery Grants for Farmworkers.** In November 1999, the Secretary announced \$20 million in grants to help low-income migrant and seasonal farmworkers who faced economic hardship. Grants went to both public agencies and private organizations in Arkansas, California, Florida, New Jersey, Ohio, and Puerto Rico to pay for various emergency services, including housing, food, school supplies, transportation, medical and dental care, and rent or mortgage payments. Crops in many parts of the country had been devastated by winter freezes, hurricanes, and severe drought conditions, the Secretary said in awarding the funds. As a result, the income of many farmworkers had declined by more than 50 percent. Last winter, more than 80,000 migrant farmworkers in California lost work due to crop disasters, including a citrus freeze. California received two grants totaling \$9.4 million to help provide housing, school supplies, medicine, and transportation. Florida, which suffered various emergencies including hurricanes, freezes, drought, and fires, received a \$9.1 million grant to provide housing assistance, including rental housing, and to establish a revolving loan fund for housing rehabilitation.

**Mutual Self-Help Housing.** The Mutual Self-Help Housing Program makes mortgage costs affordable to people with very low and low incomes by allowing them to contribute "sweat equity," which they earn by building their own homes. The program provides grants to nonprofit and municipal technical assistance providers, who supervise small groups of families in the construction of their own homes. In FY 1999, RHS provided 121 grantees in 44 States with a total of \$24.9 million in technical assistance grants. In turn, the grantees supervised 1,500 families in the construction of their own homes, of which approximately 70 percent were minority families.

**Rural Home Loan Partnership.** Some 645,000 loans totaling \$47.8 million were obligated, including \$15.5 million for very-low-income borrowers, \$18.4 million for low-income borrowers, \$10.8 million for the lender's portion, and \$3.0 million for the grantee's portion. Low-income means 50-80 percent of the area median income, and very-low-income means below 50 percent of the area median income (which is an average income by county).

**Farm Labor Housing Awarded.** In October 1999, Secretary Dan Glickman awarded \$32.4 million in loans and grants for construction of 622 rental housing units for domestic farm laborers across the Nation. The funds will also help repair and improve 13 farmworker housing complexes. In the past, the migrant worker housing program worked on a first-come, first-served basis, which resulted in a backlog of applications—with some new applicants often waiting 2-3 years for funding. In FY 1999, the program operated under a national competition for the first time.

## **Rural Business-Cooperative Service (RBS)**

**President's New Markets Tour Highlights Success of Cooperatives in Providing Jobs in Rural America.** In 1996, a group of 15 farmers with limited resources and land, most on the verge of bankruptcy, formed the Hermitage Tomato Cooperative in Hermitage, Arkansas, a town of less than 700 people. In 1999, the President and Secretary Glickman toured the cooperative to praise the business as a model of rural economic success.

The Hermitage Cooperative took off in part because of \$4 million in loan guarantees from USDA and a USDA-negotiated agreement for the sale of tomatoes to Burger King. USDA is currently funding an additional \$4.8 million in loan guarantees to help the Hermitage Cooperative expand its packing operations, build a convenience store and farm supply outlet, and create more local jobs. The cooperative is also experimenting with greenhouse tomatoes, which would enable it to expand its growing season to 9 months each year. USDA's B&I Guaranteed Loan Program is offering \$850 million in loan guarantees in FY 2000 to support the

development of new or expanded businesses in rural America. Of these funds, about \$150 million is expected to fund rural cooperatives.

During the tour, the President also announced a new agreement under which Burger King will buy up to 3.2 million pounds of cucumbers from the Mississippi Association of Cooperatives, a group of minority-owned co-ops in the Mississippi Delta. The Secretary also announced additional USDA effort to increase credit to qualified minority-owned businesses and limited-resource farmers and ranchers through an agreement with the National Bankers Association.

**Rural Development Grants Assist Northwest Tribes.** A total of \$8.4 million in loans and grants under various RD programs is being invested to support the Pacific Northwest/Tongass National Forest Initiative, which is aimed at creating new business and jobs in portions of Oregon, Washington, Alaska, and northern California that have been negatively impacted by restrictions on logging. Oregon received one of the larger grants, \$199,000 to help the Wallowa Band of the Nez Perce Tribe develop a Tribal interpretive center to promote economic development around Wallowa, Oregon.

**Rural Development Program Created or Saved 150,000 Jobs in 1998.** Under its B&I Program, RD provided about \$2 billion in total loan guarantees during 1998 and 1999 to finance rural businesses. RD programs are estimated to have created or saved more than 150,000 jobs in 1998 alone, of which about 44,000 jobs were created or saved by the B&I Program.

## **Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS)**

**Small Farmers Assisted.** AMS established a cooperative agreement with Southern University and A&M College to develop and conduct an outreach marketing conference.

- T** The Agricultural Marketing Outreach Workshop held in Memphis, Tennessee, targeted minority, limited-resource, and other small farmers in seven Mid-Southern States. It taught small farmers to maximize their economic potential by developing effective marketing plans to produce and market quality products.
- T** Twenty-two farmers from each of the seven States targeted were selected to participate in the conference. Committees of State Food and Agriculture Council representatives and representatives from the 1862 and 1890 land-grant institutions solicited input from various farmer cooperatives and community-based organizations. The 154 scholarship recipients represented a cross section of farmers based on farm size, type of operation, location, race, and gender. Of the 154 scholarship recipients, 18 percent were female and 82 percent male; 2 percent were Hispanic, 9 percent



American Indian, 23 percent White, and 66 percent Black. The 500 participants called the event beneficial to all participants and asked USDA to conduct similar workshops for limited-resource farmers on an annual basis. The conference in Memphis represents USDA's third such outreach summit.

- T AMS, NRCS, and Florida A&M University worked with a group of minority limited-resource farmers to develop marketing opportunities for fresh produce with local schools in the Florida Panhandle. The project has assisted these minority limited-resource farmers with various aspects of agribusiness, including organization, market development, business planning, production and processing, transportation, and customer service. A series of bulletins and a comprehensive report will serve as a blueprint for success for minority limited-resource farmers across the country.

**Commodity Boards and Committees Diversify.** AMS has begun an intensive effort to improve the diversity of marketing order committees and national research and promotion boards. The agency has targeted women and minorities for participation on the boards. Since September 1998, nearly 50 percent of all nominations to marketing order committees have shown an increase in diversity. Three committees have increased in minority representation and 12 committees have increased in representation of women, including five committees in which women were nominated for the first time. The diversity initiative is a wide-ranging program of outreach which includes media contacts, presentations at meetings and conferences, identification of and contact with organizations that represent women, minorities, and persons with disabilities, as well as key influences from commodity industries.

**Small and Disadvantaged Businesses Utilized.** The FY 1999 rate of small business set-asides and achievement increased from FY 1998.

- T Livestock and Seed Programs increased the number of minority or women-owned 8(a) companies from four to eight firms in FY 1999, a 100-percent increase.
- T The Fruit and Vegetable Program increased its purchases from disadvantaged businesses from 5.42 percent in FY 1998 to 6.04 percent in FY 1999.
- T The Poultry Program had a 50-percent increase in the number of bidders representing 8(a) disadvantaged and women-owned businesses and, to date, has increased the participation of small businesses to 15 percent.
- T The Poultry Program awarded \$3.6 million to 8 (a) contracts under the interagency agreement between AMS and the Small Business Administration. Poultry Programs are currently working with the Department's Office of Small and Disadvantaged

Business Utilization (OSDBU) to lower the small business competitive threshold for competitive bidding from \$5 million to \$1.5 million for specific purchases.

- T In FY 1998, the Livestock and Seed Program had an extensive outreach effort to increase the number of minority and women-owned firms in the commodity programs. They contacted 110 small-disadvantaged businesses; 27 were women-owned businesses and 45 were minority-owned businesses.

## **Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)**

**Environmental Justice Pursued.** The APHIS Program Delivery Work Group developed an outreach plan for program delivery, provided to program managers in October 1998, with progress measured through quarterly accomplishment reports. The APHIS Environmental Justice Committee developed policy and guidance regulations to give employees guidelines for integrating environmental justice considerations in program planning, program activities (existing and future), and data analysis and reporting.

**Tribal Needs Considered.** Program specialists in APHIS maintain a networking system to consult with American Indian Tribal leaders about Tribal concerns and needs. Managers and program coordinators consider the impact of agency decisions on Tribal trust resources and consult with Tribal governments to ensure that Tribal rights, issues, and concerns are addressed. Funding was provided in FY 1999 to maintain the APHIS Native American Working Group.

## **Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA)**

**Outreach Expanded.** GIPSA removed perceived barriers to its programs and increased participation of underserved groups by significantly increasing its outreach efforts to assist disadvantaged and underserved customers.

- T For example, GIPSA provided financial support to community-based organizations such as the Migrant Farm Labor Center in Hope, Arkansas, and to special events for socially disadvantaged groups, such as the second annual Black Farmers Conference in New Orleans, Louisiana.
- T GIPSA also participated jointly with other USDA agencies to support recruiting disabled individuals at career fairs and conferences. GIPSA's Disability Employment Program Manager has helped managers focus on recruiting people with disabilities.

**Cooperative Agreements Increased.** GIPSA increased the number of cooperative agreements with community-based organizations and minority-serving institutions. New agreements in FY 1999 cover a number of diverse areas, including working with Alcorn State University's Ag HOPE; assisting with recruiting minority students at Southern Arkansas University; supporting Kentucky State University Cooperative Education students; and increasing funds for the Conference for Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences. GIPSA also supported a mentoring program for Hispanic students at the University of Puerto Rico, and continued its relationship with several small and disadvantaged women-owned businesses.

## **Departmental Administration (DA)**

**Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) Partnerships Established.** OSDBU established partnerships with the National Black Chamber of Commerce, League of United Latin American Citizens, National Indian Business Association, Business Women's Network, and National Black Business Council to enhance opportunities for small and disadvantaged businesses.

**Office of Human Resource Management (OHRM) Accountability and Disciplinary Action Bolstered.** OHRM and the Office of Civil Rights are collaborating on comprehensive new USDA policies on accountability and discipline in civil rights related cases. These new policies will assure that employees and supervisors are held accountable for their discriminatory conduct. Under the new policies, a case will be referred to OHRM for review whenever a finding of discrimination is made or a settlement agreement is reached. The policies also prescribe the application of appropriate penalties, ranging from reprimand to removal.

**Farmworker Safety Promoted.** During the summer of 1998, Department of Labor conducted the third annual "Work Safe this Summer" child labor education initiative, specifically promoting child labor compliance on farm employment and safety. The campaign was cosponsored by USDA, National Consumers League, Association of Farmworker Opportunity and National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health.

**Recruitment From Underrepresented Group Fostered.** OHRM has put resources and programs in place to improve planning and coordination of affirmative recruitment across USDA.

**Training and Technical Assistance Provided to Small and Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers.** In FY 1999, the Office of Outreach continued to fund 27 projects to provide training and technical assistance to farmers and ranchers. These efforts continue to reduce delinquency rates of current USDA borrowers, bring more producers into USDA loan

programs, and increase the net return to small farmers through financial and farm plan improvements, including increased marketing initiatives.

**Excess Property Transferred to Minority Institutions.** The Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 authorized USDA to acquire and transfer title to excess Federal property to 1890, 1994, and Hispanic Serving Institutions. The transfers include such items as furniture, vehicles, tractors, and medical supplies. As of March 2000, USDA had transferred more than \$1 million in excess property to these institutions.

## **Pigford v. Glickman: Consent Decree in Class Action Suit by African-American Farmers**

### **Background and Current Status**

The printed data on the following pages was up-to-date in late April 2000 when this report went to press. For the most up-to-date information, consult the web site at [www.usda.gov/da/consent.html](http://www.usda.gov/da/consent.html).

### **Background**

In 1997, a number of African American farmers consolidated their claims of racial discrimination in farm lending and benefit programs into one class action suit against the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), *Pigford v. Glickman*. The class is defined as all African Americans who:

- T      Farmed, or attempted to farm, between January 1, 1981, and December 31, 1996,
- T      Applied to USDA during that time for participation in a Federal farm credit or benefit program and who believed they were discriminated against on the basis of race in USDA's response to that application, and
- T      Filed a discrimination complaint on or before July 1, 1997, regarding USDA's treatment of their credit or benefit application.

### **Claims Process:**

On January 5, 1999, African American farmers and USDA entered into a 5-year Consent Decree. On April 14, 1999, the Court approved the settlement and provided a framework which assigned tasks, and time frames, to specific parties to settle the claims. The decree provides for:

- T     A *Facilitator* (Poorman-Douglas Corporation) that determines if each case meets the class definition,
- T     An *Adjudicator* (Poorman-Douglas Corporation and JAMS-Endispute) that adjudicates "Track A" cases (see below for an explanation of "Track A" and "Track B"),
- T     An *Arbitrator* (Michael Lewis) who adjudicates "Track B" cases, and
- T     A *Monitor* (Randi Ilyse Roth) to ensure that the decree functions properly. The Court appointed the Monitor on January 18, 2000, and she began operations on March 1, 2000. Although the Adjudicator's decision is final, if the Monitor believes there has been an error in screening, adjudication, or arbitration of a claim, that is likely to result in a "fundamental miscarriage of justice," the Monitor can direct a re-examination of the claim. The Monitor will make regular reports to the Court, as well as attempt to informally resolve disputes.

Each of these parties operates independently of USDA.

Under the Consent Decree framework, claimants determined by the Facilitator to be members of the class could choose one of two "tracks" for processing their claims.

#### **Track A:**

Under **Track A**, the claimant completes a claim form, which is submitted to the Adjudicator. The Adjudicator's decision is based on the claim submitted by the claimant and any information submitted by USDA pertaining to the claim. This is the more streamlined track and most of the claimants—19,595 to date—have chosen it. Even though the deadlines have passed, the number of Track A claims may increase, as some claims which the Facilitator found to be incomplete or late are being reviewed by the Arbitrator.

- T     Those who meet the class definition and who provide written "substantial evidence" of credit discrimination to the Adjudicator, receive a blanket payment of \$50,000, plus additional relief in the form of forgiveness of their debt on loans affected by discriminatory conduct, and some offset of tax liability.
- T     Those with written "substantial evidence" of noncredit discrimination do not receive the \$50,000 payment, but instead receive the amount of the benefit that was wrongly denied, provided funds are available for this purpose.

#### **Track B:**

Under **Track B**, those who believe they have evidence of extreme wrongdoing go before an Arbitrator to seek larger damages. Only 151 claimants have chosen Track B. Track B has a

higher standard of proof ("preponderance of the evidence") than Track A, but provides for a tailored settlement based on individual circumstances, including a cash payment equal to actual damages, and forgiveness of outstanding USDA loans affected by discriminatory conduct.

**Additional Relief:**

Under terms of the decree, USDA is also required to provide additional help to claimants whose claims are upheld. This includes:

- T      Priority consideration on a one-time basis to buy, lease, or otherwise acquire property in USDA's inventory,
- T      Priority consideration for one direct farm ownership loan and one farm operating loan, and
- T      Technical assistance and services.

A request for additional relief must be in writing and signed within 5 years of the date of the decree (April 14, 1999). USDA must view all applications in a light most favorable to the claimant and the amount and terms of any loan must be the most favorable permitted by law and USDA regulations. Applicants must, however, meet the eligibility requirements for the benefit requested.

**Opting Out:**

Claimants were not required to take part in the Consent Decree process. They were provided the opportunity to **Opt Out** of the class action suit, between April 14, 1999, and August 12, 1999. 233 farmers chose to opt out, and continue their individual cases in the administrative process or in court. To date, approximately 30 claimants have chosen to pursue discrimination cases with USDA.

## **Current Status of Cases**

**Total Claims Filed:**

To date, the Facilitator has reviewed 19,891 claims filed under the Consent Decree. Of these, 19,595 Track A claims and 151 Track B claims were accepted for processing. The remaining 145 claims were rejected based on a determination that the claimant was not a member of the class.

**Track A Claims:**

To date, of the 19,595 claimants who have chosen Track A, USDA has submitted its responses on 19,264 to the Adjudicator. Of these, the Adjudicator has decided 13,650 cases so far:

**T      8,265 cases (60.5 percent)** have been **upheld**—decided in favor of the claimant.

**T      5,385 cases (39.5 percent)** have been **denied**.

Once the Adjudicator has notified USDA of an approved decision, USDA has approximately 45 days to respond regarding the loans to be forgiven. Only loans identified by the Adjudicator are eligible for forgiveness. At the same time, the Department of Justice (DOJ), which is responsible for coordinating the payment of the financial settlement, sets the process in motion to issue a check. DOJ wires funds to the Facilitator, which sends the check to the claimant. USDA has no control over claim decisions and does not issue the check.

As of April 26, 2000, the Facilitator has mailed \$50,000 each in settlement to 4,130 claimants. **This totals almost \$207 million.**

Because of the volume of claims to be paid, there has been some difficulty in coordinating the payments. In some cases, payments have been delayed. USDA, DOJ, and the Facilitator are working to solve these problems and all payments will be made as quickly as possible, with the goal of making payments within 90 days of the decision.

#### **Track B Claims:**

Of the 151 claimants who have chosen Track B, three cases have been tried before the Arbitrator. One claimant has won an award, and two are awaiting decisions. Seven cases have been dismissed by the Arbitrator; two of these were dismissed with the consent of the claimant. Two cases are settled, and one other case is in negotiation.

#### **Loans Forgiven:**

Of the 8,265 verified decisions for claimants as of April 26, 2000, the Adjudicator has identified 2,162 loans (841 claimants) for cancellation, and USDA has canceled all 137 loans (91 claimants) that had remaining balances. These 137 loans represent **\$6,131,803** in principal and interest that has been forgiven. USDA has also returned **\$129,243** to others who had offsets taken to service delinquent accounts.

Secretary Glickman's policy on foreclosures is still in effect and is part of the Consent Decree: *No acceleration of loan repayment or foreclosure will take place on a claimant who has a claim pending.*

# Progress on Recommendations from Civil Rights Action Team Report

April 2000

In February 1997, Secretary Glickman accepted the findings of a team that listened to customers and employees from across the United States to find out how well USDA was serving the people and how well the Department treated its employees. The findings of their efforts were reported in *Civil Rights at the United States Department of Agriculture—A Report by the Civil Rights Action Team (CRAT)*. Based on the findings, the Department made a commitment to take action on all 92 CRAT recommendations, summarized and updated in the chart below. More information on these recommendations and previous CRAT publications is available on the web at [www.usda.gov/news/civil/cr.html](http://www.usda.gov/news/civil/cr.html).

## Key

✓ = Done      P = Substantial Progress      C = Requires Congressional Action

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|---|---|
| 1. Give the Assistant Secretary for Administration authority over civil rights.   | ✓ |
| 2. Have the Assistant Secretary for Administration rate agency heads on their civil rights performance.   | ✓ |
| 3. Hold subcabinet members, agency heads, and senior officials accountable for results-oriented affirmative employment and civil rights implementation plans.     | ✓ |
| 4. Revise and reissue USDA's Civil Rights Policy to include specific, measurable goals and objectives in program delivery and employment.                         | ✓ |
| 5. Adopt and enforce a policy to take action against any manager found guilty of reprisal.  | ✓ |
| 6. Streamline procedures so agencies can quickly take adverse and disciplinary actions against employees who discriminate or harass USDA customers and employees. | ✓ |
| 7. Have the Secretary, USDA's Subcabinet, and agency heads set examples by ensuring their immediate staffs reflect diversity.                                     | P |
| 8. Include workforce diversity and civil rights in USDA's Strategic Plans under the Government Performance and Results Act.                                       | P |
| 9. Collect data from USDA field offices to measure program delivery to minority, women, and small and limited-resource farmers.                                   | P |



*Progress on Recommendations from Civil Rights Action Team Report, continued*

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| 10. Make performance standards for agency heads and all senior officials that reflect specific goals and objectives in agency's strategic plans.   | ✓  |
| 11. Identify core competencies and skills for managers and make all potential managers demonstrate them.   | P  |
| 12. Give all managers training in people skills, including managing a diverse workforce.   | ✓  |
| 13. Ask the Department of Justice to investigate allegations of abuse of authority by USDA's Office of Inspector General and Forest Service Law Enforcement.   | ✓* |
| 14. Tell the Forest Service to stop using its Law Enforcement staff to investigate FS employees.   | ✓  |
| 15. Give the Office of General Counsel additional staffing in civil rights.  | ✓  |
| 16. Ask Congress for authority to ensure accountability in FSA and RD State and county offices.  | C  |
| 17. Convert all non-Federal FSA State and County Committee positions to Federal employee status.   | C  |
| 17a. Remove County Committees from farm loan determinations.   | ✓  |
| 18. Review County Committees and county office staffs for nepotism, conflict of interest, and/or discrimination in program delivery.   | ✓  |
| 19. Have county offices handle loan applications in a timely and equitable way.  | P  |
| 20. Have an independent review of all pending foreclosures to find if discrimination contributed to the foreclosure action.  | ✓  |
| 21. Halt all pending foreclosures or actions leading to foreclosure until all appeals of any civil rights complaints have been completed.  | ✓  |
| 22. Act on all program discrimination complaints within 120 days.  | P  |
| 23. Have the agency civil rights office elevate program discrimination complaints to the next level when no action has been taken within the time limit. If there is a delay at the next higher level, have the agency immediately act on the complaint in favor of the customer. <i>(Note: USDA designed an alternative process for handling complaints.)</i> | P  |

*Progress on Recommendations from Civil Rights Action Team Report, continued*

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| 24. Establish one program appeals system for all mission areas at USDA.   | ✓ |
| 25. Have the National Appeals Division (NAD) Director consider the impact of the NAD appeals process on the civil rights of farmers.  | ✓ |
| 26. Make the National Appeals Division and the informal agency program appeals process comply with established legal time lines.  | ✓ |
| 27. Hold managers accountable for carrying out the final decisions of the NAD within 10 working days after they have been issued. <i>(Note: By law, implementations are to be done within 30 days.)</i> | ✓ |
| 28. Have a voluntary register of minority farms to establish a baseline for the number of these farms.  | P |
| 29. Fully implement a Debt for Nature program.  | P |
| 30. Establish a Special Task Force to figure out how to provide remediation to farmers who have been discriminated against.   | P |
| 31. Let farmers who have received debt write-down or whose farms are pending liquidation continue their eligibility operating loans.  | C |
| 32. Let certain farmers who have a positive cash-flow complete their lease back/buy back agreements.  | C |
| 33. Let farmers use anticipated tax liability on their debt write-downs.  | C |
| 34. Let farmers who pay their rent and utility bills on time apply for 502 single-family housing.   | ✓ |
| 35. Let farmers get their EQIP cost-share payments the same year they complete conservation practices.  | C |
| 36. Appoint a diverse commission to develop a national policy on small farms.   | ✓ |
| 37. Establish an Office of Outreach to coordinate outreach efforts throughout USDA.   | ✓ |
| 38. Develop a strategic outreach plan that holds agency heads accountable.  | ✓ |
| 39. Establish outreach liaison positions in each agency.  | ✓ |
| 40. Establish State and National Outreach Councils.   | P |

*Progress on Recommendations from Civil Rights Action Team Report, continued*

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| 41. Partner with the Department of the Interior to develop an outreach plan to American Indians.   | P |
| 42. Make land-grant institutions and major programs (CSREES, ARS, ERS, FS, and NRCS) identify and give priority to the research and educational needs of the socially disadvantaged. | P |
| 43. Make sure 1890 and 1994 land-grant institutions are getting equitable financial support.   | ✓ |
| 44. Fund the Outreach and Technical Assistance to Socially Disadvantaged Farmers (2501) programs at \$10 million annually.   | P |
| 45. Fund the Extension Indian Reservation program at \$8 million annually.   | P |
| 46. Increase EQIP funding from \$200 million to \$300 million and target the increase to help minority and limited-resource farmers and ranchers.                                    | C |
| 47. Fund the farm ownership program at \$84 million and the farm operating direct loan program at \$500 million.   | ✓ |
| 48. Target a higher percentage of farm ownership and farm operating direct loan funds to minorities and socially-disadvantaged groups.   | C |
| 49. Use one-third of the Fund for Rural America to help socially-disadvantaged customers.  | C |
| 50. Target \$100 million each year from the Rural Utilities Service Water and Waste Disposal Grant Program for Indian Tribes.  | P |
| 51. Target \$50 million of Rural Housing Service funds to the Farmworker Housing Program.  | P |
| 52. Consider the needs of underserved communities when locating USDA Service Centers.  | ✓ |
| 53. Establish satellite offices where needed to reach underserved customers.   | ✓ |
| 54. Establish full-time USDA Service Centers on Tribal lands.  | ✓ |
| 55. Make sure all USDA Service Centers are accessible to people with disabilities.   | P |
| 56. Make program rules and application forms easier to understand and fill out and provide help to customers who need it to fill out the forms.                                      | ✓ |

*Progress on Recommendations from Civil Rights Action Team Report, continued*

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| 57. Train FSA County Committees and county office staff on civil rights issues and their outreach responsibilities.   | ✓ |
| 58. Train all volunteers and new field, State, and Service Center employees on Title VI responsibilities.   | ✓ |
| 59. Put USDA information in languages the community needs. Distribute information to underserved communities using appropriate media outlets.                                     | ✓ |
| 60. Address the needs of farmworkers that are not being addressed.  | P |
| 61. Make those who use “restrictive-use pesticides” keep application records.   | P |
| 62. Get information on treating pesticide-related illnesses to health care providers.   | P |
| 63. Make USDA use the information from #62 to prepare reports mandated in the 1990 and 1996 farm legislation.   | ✓ |
| 64. Enforce the Environmental Justice Executive Order at USDA.  | P |
| 65. Increase the number of small and disadvantaged businesses in USDA programs.   | P |
| 66. Review all Senior Executive Service designations for appropriateness.   | ✓ |
| 67. Hold all managers accountable for having a diverse pool of applicants for vacancies.  | P |
| 68. Give all USDA employees civil rights training each year.  | ✓ |
| 69. Recognize managers and agencies that have accomplished workforce diversity.   | ✓ |
| 70. Have FS end the use of surplus lists.   | ✓ |
| 71. Evaluate the role and function of the Special Emphasis Program Managers.  | ✓ |
| 72. Use retention programs to ensure a diverse workforce.   | P |
| 73. Offer mediation, arbitration, or alternative dispute resolution to reduce the backlog of EEO complaints.  | ✓ |
| 74. Have all agreements that resolve EEO complaints 1) relate to the complaint; 2) address causal factors; 3) have timely implementation; and 4) have implementation time frames. | P |
| 75. Conduct an independent review of USDA’s existing EEO system.  | ✓ |

*Progress on Recommendations from Civil Rights Action Team Report, continued*

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| 76. Have a USDA-wide workforce planning and recruitment process.   | P |
| 77. Have the Secretary be more involved in managing and selecting the SES cadre within USDA.   | ✓ |
| 78. Consolidate USDA's civil rights functions under one office, which reports directly to the Assistant Secretary for Administration. Fill the top position immediately with a qualified career SES. | ✓ |
| 79. Organize the new civil rights office with separate employment and program civil rights components.   | ✓ |
| 80. Have USDA's Civil Rights Office pro-actively promote civil rights, provide oversight and guidance, and establish and disseminate civil rights policy.  | ✓ |
| 81. Have USDA's Director of Civil Rights be accountable for investigating program discrimination complaints.   | ✓ |
| 82. Have the Director of Civil Rights focus on improving USDA's enforcement of civil rights laws in program delivery.  | ✓ |
| 83. Give the Director of Civil Rights the authority to create a quality, competent staff and the flexibility to reassign and hire staff.   | ✓ |
| 84. Make the Director of Civil Rights position career reserved, rather than general – but don't let that hold up appointing a permanent director.  | ✓ |
| 85. Have the Office of the General Counsel establish a division dedicated to providing legal counsel on civil rights issues.   | ✓ |
| 86. To ensure accountability, make each USDA agency have a civil rights director who reports to the agency head.   | ✓ |
| 87. Include program planning/analysis, compliance, and complaints management in civil rights programs.   | ✓ |
| 88. Return EEO counselor positions to the agencies and make them full-time positions.  | ✓ |
| 89. Adopt a USDA policy that requires management to be responsible for preventing conflict and resolving disputes at the lowest possible level.  | ✓ |
| 90. Convene a team to develop a new conflict management policy.  | ✓ |

*Progress on Recommendations from Civil Rights Action Team Report, continued*

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| 91. Eliminate the Dispute Resolution Boards and close USDA's Civil Rights Regional Service Centers.                   | ✓  |
| 92. Consolidate all administrative and management functions at USDA under the Assistant Secretary for Administration. | ✓* |

*\*Handled administratively.*

## Abbreviations

AMS	Agricultural Marketing Service
APHIS	Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
ARS	Agricultural Research Service
CRAT	Civil Rights Action Team
CRIT	Civil Rights Implementation Team
CSREES	Cooperative, State, Research, Education & Extension Service
DA	Departmental Administration
DOJ	Department of Justice
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
ERS	Economic Research Service
FAS	Foreign Agricultural Service
FNS	Food and Nutrition Service
FS	Forest Service
FSA	Farm Service Agency
GIPSA	Grain Inspection, Packers & Stockyards Administration
HACU	Hispanic Association of Colleges & Universities
NAD	National Appeals Division
NASS	National Agricultural Statistics Service
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
OGC	Office of the General Counsel
OHRM	Office of Human Resources Management
OSDBU	Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization
RBS	Rural Business—Cooperative Service
RD	Rural Development
RHS	Rural Housing Service
RMA	Risk Management Agency
RUS	Rural Utilities Service



To find this report on the Internet, go to:  
<http://www.usda.gov/news/civil/cr.html>